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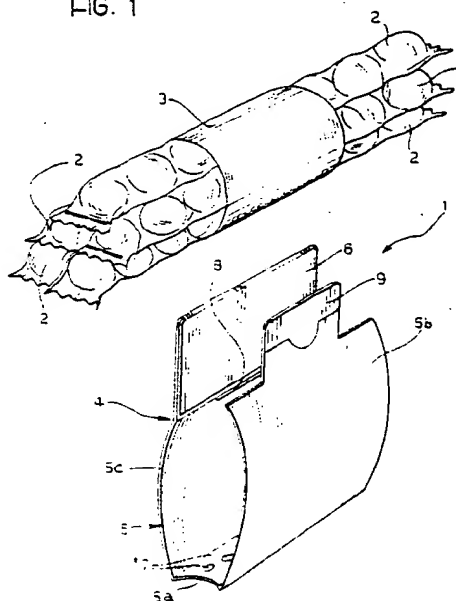
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I-10152 Torino (IT)(52) **A package for food products such as confectionary products.**

(57) A plurality of elongate elements (2) constituted, for example, by flow-pack wrappers each containing a plurality of pralines or chocolates, is gripped in a heat-shrinkable wrapper (3) and then inserted in a band (4) comprising a loop portion (5) for surrounding the wrapper (3) as well as a radial appendage (6) forming a card for affixing wording, pictures, etc.

FIG. 1

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The present invention relates to a package for food products according to the preamble to Claim 1.

The invention has been developed with particular, although not exclusive, attention to its possible use for packaging food products such as confectionery products.

In this context, it is common to encounter elongate package elements which may be constituted either by the products themselves directly (for example, if the products are breadsticks, elongate biscuits, bars of any food substances etc., possibly covered with chocolate or other food substances and wrapped in respective wrappers) or by subsidiary packaging elements such as, for example, tubular wrappers, possibly of the flow-pack type, in each of which there is a plurality of individual products, for example, pralines, chocolates, etc. An example of this latter situation is the package currently used for the pralines sold under the trade name of "GIOTTO" or "TONUS" by companies of the Ferrero group. In this case, each elongate element is constituted by a tubular wrapper of the flow-pack type, inside which there is a certain number of spherical pralines.

In producing packages of the type specified above, it is necessary to reconcile various requirements which usually conflict with one another at least marginally.

In the first place, the fact that the product is quite exposed and visible in the package usually constitutes an attractive element to the potential purchaser and consumer. It is, however, necessary to prevent the visibility of the product from making it too easy to tamper with the packages, possibly with the removal of the product at the point of sale, such as a supermarket, etc.

In the second place, there is an increasing tendency, in the food field, and in the confectionery field in particular, to give products - particularly packages - a hand-made appearance, so to speak. Moreover, the product must be capable of being processed and packaged fully automatically at the very fast rates provided for by industrial production processes.

Then there is a whole series of additional requirements such as that of ensuring that the package can easily be gathered together with identical packages so that it can be packed easily during transfer from the production location to storage and sales locations, at the same time ensuring that, once removed from the packing, the packages can be displayed, even individually, without the risk of accidentally falling off the display shelves, etc. Moreover, it is desirable to ensure that, in addition to information required by the regulations (composition, place of production, sell-by date, etc.); it is also easy to reproduce on the package pictures,

symbols and wording to make the package itself more attractive.

The object of the present invention is to provide a package which can satisfy all the requirements mentioned above in an excellent manner.

According to the present invention, this object is achieved by virtue of a package according to Claim 1.

Advantageous developments of the invention form the subject of dependent Claims 2 to 10.

The invention will now be described, purely by way of non-limiting example, with reference to the appended drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a partially exploded, perspective view of a possible embodiment of a package according to the invention,

Figure 2 is a side elevational view of a first variant of the package according to the invention, and

Figure 3 shows the package of Figure 2 in the closed condition.

In the drawings, a package for food products such as, for example, confectionery products is generally indicated 1 (with reference to both of the variants illustrated - which differ, however, only with reference to some elements).

The products in question are in the form of elongate elements 2 inside the package.

As already indicated in the introductory portion of the present description, the elongate elements may be:

- either the food products themselves (for example, breadsticks, elongate biscuits, bars of any food substances, etc.), possibly wrapped in respective wrappers,
- or pluralities of food products (such as pralines, chocolates, etc.) which are not themselves elongate but which are collected inside a respective elongate package (which may be defined as a subsidiary package in the present context); for example, a tubular wrapper of the flow-pack type, inside which there is a certain number of spherical pralines.

The elongate elements 2 are gathered together in a bundle, held together by a wrapper 3 of heat-shrinkable material.

The wrapper 3 is fitted onto the elongate elements 2 in an extended condition (according to known criteria) and is then exposed to moderate heating (also according to known criteria) so as to heat-shrink it and consequently to tighten it closely onto the elements 2.

This ensures that the gripping effect exerted by the wrapper 3 on the elements 2 is firm, in order to prevent individual elements 2 from being able to come out of the bundle (as could occur, for example, at the point of sale) but, at the same time, light

so as not to damage the elements 2 and the respective products which are usually quite delicate.

A band 4 of sheet material, such as card, fitted around the wrapper 3 (with the main purpose of hiding it from the exterior) comprises a loop portion 5 for wrapping around the products 2 held together by the wrapper 3 and a radial appendage 6 for forming a kind of card for affixing inscriptions, pictures, etc. to the package.

More precisely, within the loop portion 5, it is possible to distinguish:

- a base 5a on which the elements 2 are intended to rest, and
- two curved side cheeks 5b and 5c for surrounding or being wrapped around the elements 2, so to speak.

Drops (or possibly streaks) of adhesive material, for example "hot-melt" adhesive, indicated 7, are intended to connect the base 5a to the wrapper 3 to prevent the elements 2 gripped by the wrapper 3 from being removed from the band 4.

Various solutions may be used for closing the band 4 around the elements 2 gripped by the wrapper 3.

For example, in the solution shown in Figure 1, the connecting region between the cheek 5c and the appendage 6 extending therefrom has a horizontal slot 8 in which a tab-like appendage 9 extending from the cheek 5b is inserted.

During the final stage of the packaging, the tab 9 is inserted in the slot 8 and then closed to a position in which it is in close contact either with the radial appendage 6 (on its rear face from the view point of Figure 1) or - preferably - with the rear cheek 5c of the loop portion 5, with the interposition of adhesive elements (not shown).

In the variant to which Figure 2 relates, however, the appendage 6 is double, being constituted by two complementary appendages 6a, 6b extending from the cheek 5b and from the cheek 5c of the loop portion 5, respectively.

In this case, the package is closed as shown schematically in Figure 3, by bringing the two appendages 6a, 6b into contact with one another and then connecting them to one another, for example, with the interposition of spots or streaks of adhesive material 9 applied to the mutually facing surfaces, or by equivalent connection means.

It should also be pointed out that the single appendage 6 in the embodiment of Figure 1 may also actually be constituted by two superimposed sheets of the material which constitutes the band 4 as a whole. The formation of the appendage 6 by the superimposition of two sheets has the advantage of giving it a certain stiffness and thickness.

From this point of view, the elevational view of Figure 3 as a whole can therefore be seen as

representative both of the embodiment of Figure 1 and of the embodiment of Figure 2.

Whichever solution is used, the provision of the band 4 as a flat intermediate element of sheet material, its shaping (possibly with the provision of the slot 8 and the tab 9) and the application of the drops or streaks of adhesive 7 and 9, as well as its closure around the wrapper 3 are carried out according to known solutions which do not need to be described herein.

According to a preferred characteristic of the invention, the two cheeks 5b and 5c are not of equal length (measured around the circumference of the band 4). The cheek 5b (which is usually intended to constitute the front face of the package) is at least slightly longer - measured around the circumference of the band 4 - than the cheek 5c (which is intended to define the rear face of the package). The overall effect of these different lengths is to ensure that the connecting region between the ends of the cheeks 5b and 5c, opposite the base 5a, is disposed in an eccentric position relative to the imaginary vertical plane which extends through the base 5a in a central position in the direction in which the elements 2 extend.

In other words, once the band 4 is closed around the elements 2, the loop portion 5 takes up an at least slightly asymmetrical ogival or drop-like shape with its tip portion offset towards the cheek 5c, that is - typically - towards the rear of the package. This ensures that the radial appendage 6 is also offset rearwardly relative to the package, as a whole, that is in an "eccentric" position relative to the centre of gravity of the package.

The package 1 can therefore be placed on a display and sales shelf on the base 5a and can remain stable in this bearing position ensuring that, in any case, any stress applied to the package in a front-to-back direction (for example, as a result of the package leaning on or being leant on by other similar packages) involves, at most, a movement away from the position of equilibrium in the sense of a tendency to fall backwards (towards the cheek 5c).

When a row of packages according to the invention is placed on a display shelf with the cheeks 5b facing forwards (that is, towards the display side, or towards the side from which the package is seen) the packages tend at most to fall backwards, or rather, each package tends to lean on the package immediately behind it, so that the packages remain in the correct erect or substantially erect position precisely because they are leaning on one another in the row.

It is clear from the foregoing that a package according to the invention satisfies in an excellent manner all of the requirements set out in the in-

troductory portion of the present description.

In particular, in a package according to the invention, a good portion of each product (that is, each elongate element 2) is visible (since both the wrapper 3 and the band 4 cover only a portion of the length of the bundle of elements 2). At the same time, the elements cannot easily be removed from the package, since they are gripped by the wrapper 3 which in turn is connected to the band 4, for example, by means of spots of glue 7.

In the second place, whilst being extremely suitable for manufacture in an industrial environment, the package according to the invention retains a certain basic similarity to some packages typical of hand-production.

Moreover, both the cheeks 5b, 5c and the card formed by the appendage 6 offer a large surface for affixing wording, captions, symbols, and pictures for presenting the product. Moreover, the overall asymmetrical shape of the loop portion 5, together with the presence of the base 5a, give the package as a whole the property of stability, preventing it from accidentally falling forwards. All this is without in any way preventing a plurality of packages according to the invention from being gathered together in multiple packs for transfer to storage and sales locations.

Naturally, the principle of the invention remaining the same, the details of construction and forms of embodiment may be varied widely with respect to those described and illustrated, without thereby departing from the scope of the present invention.

Claims

1. A package for food products comprising a plurality of elongate elements (2) bundled together, characterized in that it comprises:
 - a wrapper (3) which confines the elongate elements (2) for a portion of their length, and
 - a band (4) comprising a loop portion (5) wrapped around the wrapper (3) and an appendage (6) extending radially from the loop portion (5).
2. A package according to Claim 1, characterized in that the wrapper (3) is made of heat-shrinkable material.
3. A package according to Claim 1 or Claim 2, characterized in that the loop portion (5) of the band (4) comprises a base portion (5) constituting a bearing formation for the elongate elements (2), as well as two side cheeks (5b, 5c) which enclose the elongate elements (2).
4. A package according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that connection means (7) are interposed between the wrapper (3) and the loop portion (5) of the band (4).
5. A package according to Claim 3 and Claim 4, characterized in that the connection means (7) are interposed between the wrapper (3) and the base (5a) of the loop portion (5) of the band.
6. A package according to Claim 4 or Claim 5, characterized in that the connection means (7) are adhesive connection means (7).
7. A package according to Claim 3, characterized in that one (5b) of the cheeks (5b, 5c) of the loop portion (5) has a tab (9) and the other cheek (5c) has a slot (8) for the insertion of the tab (9) in order to close the loop portion (5) of the band around the wrapper (3).
8. A package according to Claim 3, characterized in that each of the cheeks (5b, 5c) of the loop portion (5) comprises a respective radial appendage (6a, 6b) for connection to the homologous radial appendage of the other cheek.
9. A package according to Claim 8, characterized in that the respective cheek (6a, 6b) is connected to the homologous cheek (6b, 6a) by adhesive means (9).
10. A package according to Claim 3, characterized in that the cheeks (5b, 5c) of the loop portion (5) are of different lengths so that, in the finished package, the loop portion (5) has a generally asymmetrical shape with the radial appendage (6) extending in an eccentric position relative to the centre of gravity of the package (1).

FIG. 1

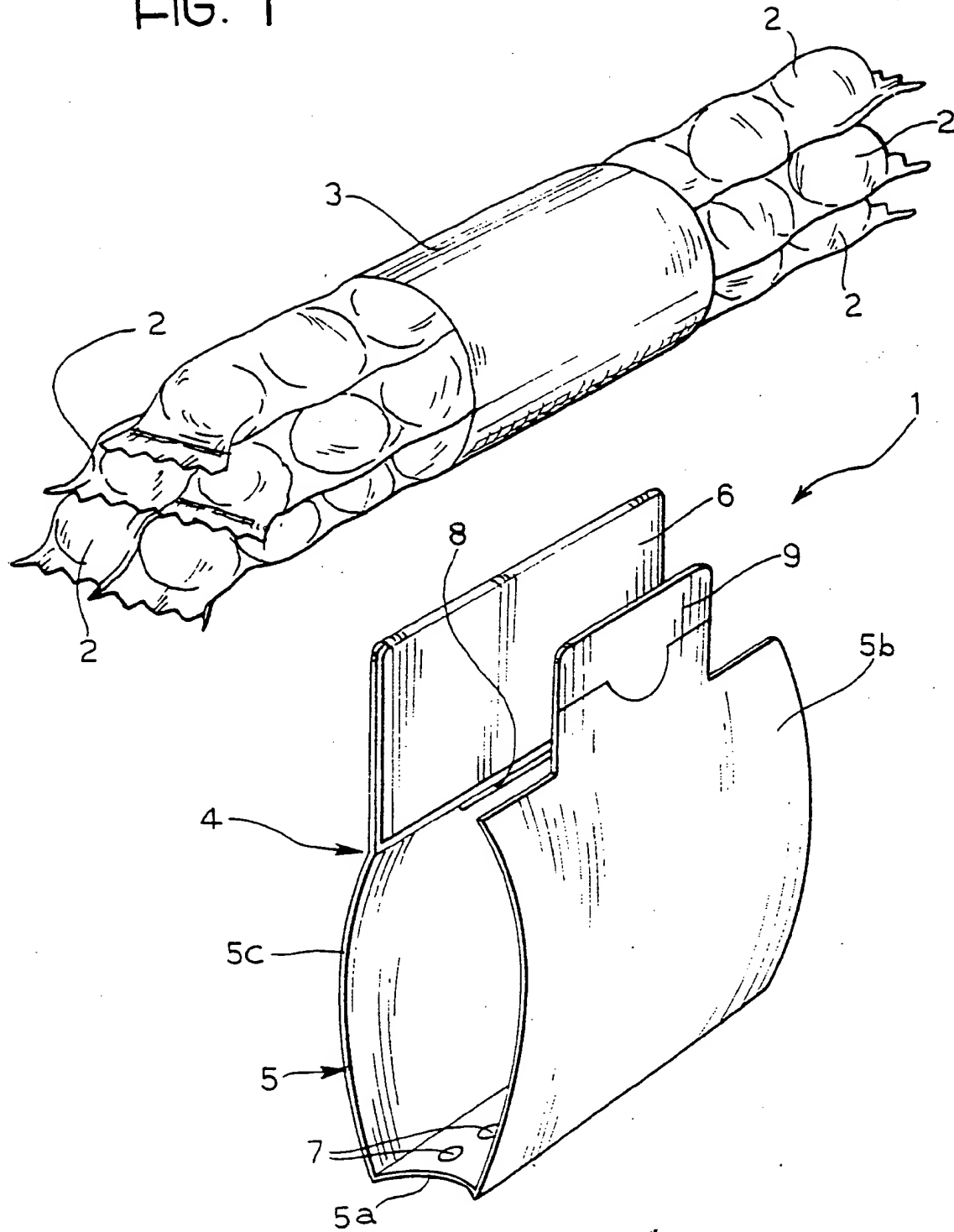


FIG. 2

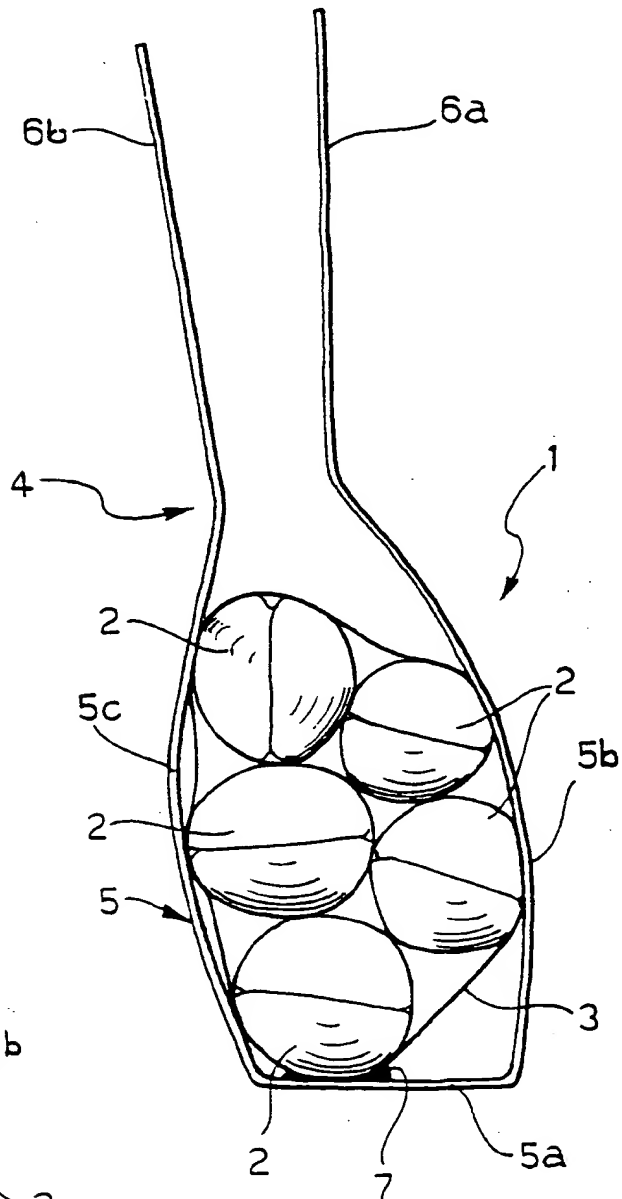
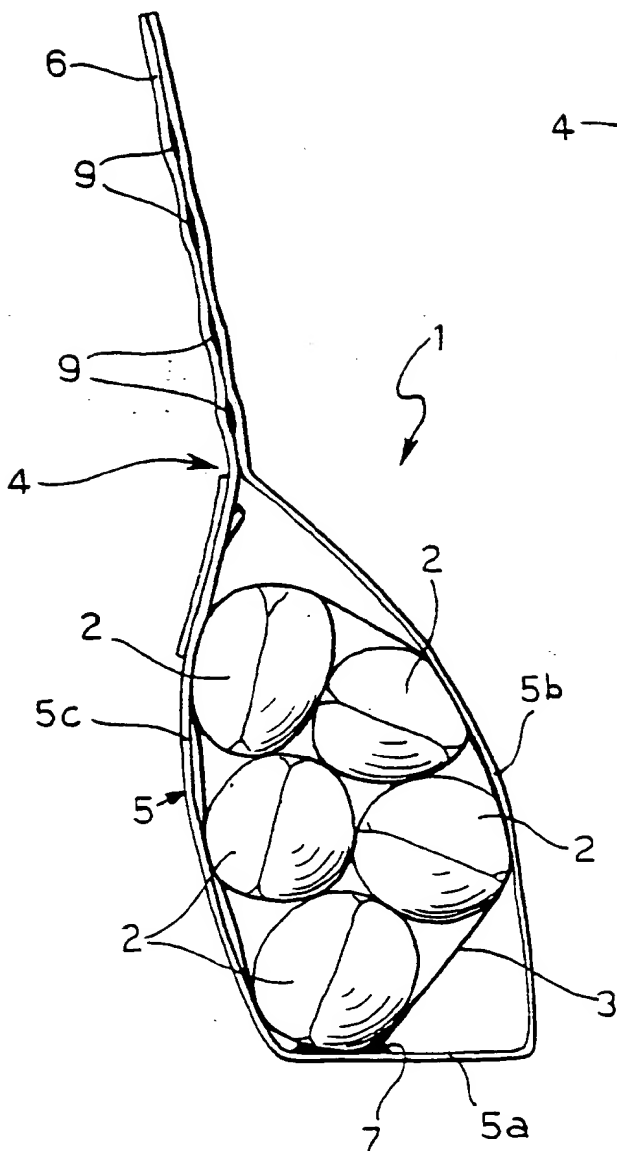


FIG. 3





European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 95 10 7111

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claims	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. CL.6)
Y	EP-A-0 135 113 (YOSHIDA KOGYO KK) * the whole document *	1-3	B65D71/00
Y	DE-U-92 07 709 (ORBIS-WERK GROTEN GMBH & CO KG) * the whole document *	1-3	
A	FR-A-2 205 047 (AGENA) * figures *	1,3,7-9	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. CL.6)
			B65D
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
THE HAGUE		6 September 1995	Gino, C
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